

June 19, 2003

Jodie Clark

Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 N. First Street, Room 400
San Jose, CA 95110-1795

RE: DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT: CIVIC
PLAZA PARKING STRUCTURE PROJECT

Dear Ms. Clark:

At the June 4, 2003 Historic Landmarks Commission meeting, the Commission discussed the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Civic Plaza Parking Structure Project. In a 4-0-3 decision (Commissioners Paim, Legaspi and Janke absent), the Commission voted to forward this comment letter, signed by the Chair, to the Director of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement and to the Planning Commission.

The Historic Landmarks Commission strongly opposes the demolition of the Fox Building. The building is a Candidate City Landmark and is eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources. It is significant for its association with the Jewish community and commerce in the City, and also as a "particularly exceptional and rare example of a Mission Revival Style industrial building" (page 38, SEIR). The Fox Building was designed by the locally significant architect, Louis T. Lenzen.

The Commission stated that the demolition of the Fox Building would be unacceptable, and, in particular, the demolition of the building for a parking garage. Commission members stated that there are not many buildings with the history, integrity and architectural quality of the Fox Building remaining in the downtown area.

While recognizing the thoroughness of the relocation study for the Fox Building included in Appendix B, Commissioners stated that the building should not be relocated but retained on site. They commented on the many alternatives identified in the SEIR. Commissioners stated that there are opportunities to modify the existing designs in order to retain the Fox Building. The block bounded by St. John, Fifth, East Santa Clara, and Fourth streets is a transition area between the residential neighborhoods and the City's urban center. In general, the Commission felt the block could accommodate a parking garage as well as the Fox Building given the urban nature of the area. Commissioners stated that any alternative selected that retains the Fox Building should also comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The Commission raised questions regarding the need for a 1,250-space garage at a time when City budgets and growth projections are being reduced. The Commission felt that there was a lack of information in the SEIR regarding alternative transportation methods to help serve the needs of those who may use the garage. The new City Hall is conveniently located near light rail, commuter bus lines and within close proximity of the

Diridon Train Station. Commissioners stated that the City of San Jose should lead by example, demonstrating through its own employee base that alternative forms of transportation are encouraged and rewarded.

To conclude, the Historic Landmarks Commission strongly recommends that the Fox Building be retained in its original location and that should the parking garage be built, that every effort be made to reduce impacts to other historic resources.

Sincerely,

Gloria Sciara, Chair
San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission

C: San Jose Historic Landmarks Commission

PBCE/002/historic/HLC 2003/June 4 03/ HLC comment letter on DEIR Civic Plaza parking garage